



Education and Culture

Leonardo da Vinci
European Training for the UK

Leonardo Da Vinci



Euromentor

Final project evaluation



Paul Garvey Consultancy Ltd, July 2007

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The partnership

Lead partner: Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre, Caerphilly, with Caerphilly County Borough Council, Wales, UK

Gorseinon College, Swansea, Wales, UK

FMH (Faculdade de Motricidade Humana – Faculty of Human Kinetics), Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal

Tempo Training & Consulting, Ostrava, Czech Republic

AEFL (Alians za Ekologia i Chuzhdi Ezici – Alliance for Ecology & Foreign Languages), Plovdiv, Bulgaria

APPACDM (Centro de Formação Profissional da Quinta dos Inglesinhos – APPACDM Lisboa – Associação Portuguesa Pais), Lisbon, Portugal

Technical support: BDF (Balear de Desarrollo y Formación), Palma de Mallorca, Balearic Islands, Spain



Introduction

“The greatest good that you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.”

Benjamin Disraeli

The Euromentor project was designed to progress the work of the very successful and highly scored Peer Mentor Support (PMS) project. Euromentor, it was hoped, would take that project onwards to a further stage of development and to a further stage of transition into training and employment.

The project aimed to complement the Me Myself I (MMI) Leonardo project, which was developed to deliver personal development training to a range of beneficiaries on the ‘extreme margin’ of society who typically did not commonly receive the level of support they required.

The previous PMS project improved methodologies for the peer support of a wide range of beneficiaries. It also developed training materials and provided accredited qualifications to be used within its transnational partnership and ultimately across the whole of the European Union.

As a result of its success and innovation, the project was highly scored by the UK national agency ECOTEC.

Euromentor is a ‘transfer of innovation’ project designed to take the peer support methodology to new target groups and a broader range of groups within the new partner countries. Its main purpose is to promote the social, educational and economic inclusion of young people from disadvantaged and disengaged groups, using a vocational training approach.

There is a stark need for projects of this kind.

Within the European Union, in the area of health alone, over 16% of people have a long-term health problem, and over 78% of these are outside the labour market. This compares with 27% who do not have a longstanding health problem. In Wales, only 7% of people with a learning disability are in paid employment. In Portugal, one of the partner countries, over 70% of people with any significant disability are at present unemployed.

To combat this situation, Euromentor aimed to:

Further develop the methods of the previous PMS project and extend the European dimension. It brought new countries into the project and engaged with new target groups.

Promote new, innovative and practical approaches in vocational training and employment, using peer mentoring support as a vehicle.

Work with training providers and employers to offer training, support and new instruments to overcome their concerns about training and the employment of young people from the target groups.

Optimise the impact and integration of the project methods into systems and practices across Europe.



The purpose of the evaluation

This final report is written in line with direction from the UK National Agency Leonardo 'Evaluation Guidance Notes' to provide a substantial record of the progress and success of the Euromentor transnational project.

The report aims to:

Examine what worked well and what did not work so well. Identify those activities that require further development in terms of what was done, and examine how they were done.

Report on the effectiveness of the process. Leonardo da Vinci projects deal with new and innovative models of activity. The process is at least as important as the output. Consequently this final evaluation reviews the process as a key aspect of the project's activities.

Assist the project team and others to plan current and future projects, and assist in identifying new opportunities.

Support the project by identifying emerging issues. The evaluation hoped, via both the interim and ongoing evaluation, to facilitate partners in taking early action when difficulties arose, to build on successes and avoid mistakes by developing best practice.

Assist in the monitoring of the project and help shape the dissemination and mainstreaming strategy.

The external evaluation was also designed to be a formative as well as a summative contribution. Advice that was offered was provided in a timely way during the course of the project to ensure it could be acted upon.

Every transnational management, evaluation and dissemination event and a range of other meetings have been attended. All the key work-package meetings have been tracked to ensure that the evaluation covered all areas of the project. The aim was to ensure that the evaluation was as seamless and as integrated into the process as possible.

The openness displayed by each of the partners towards the evaluation process helped enormously in producing as accurate and helpful a report as possible. The evaluator has been invited into all meetings at all times, including management meetings. This openness, I believe, displayed a confidence in the process and a pride in the work that was shared by the whole partnership.

The ongoing and detailed internal monitoring and evaluation of the work, combined with the willingness to find time for interviews and to facilitate meetings with beneficiaries, also provided invaluable assistance.

The general approach taken was designed to provide the greatest benefit and feedback to the partnership during the course of the project as well as at the end of the process. There has been an emphasis on:

- Beneficiary views and feedback

- Ongoing evaluation and a substantive interim evaluation

- Ongoing advice and support for the project management

- Provision of specialist advice and direction to the steering group

- Advice on protocols and partner compliance

- Integration of evaluation into the process as a standing item at transnational meetings and as an evaluation and dissemination work package

Key elements

The report is designed to be of interest and value to a wide audience, including the beneficiary groups themselves, all the transnational partners and the social partners, including representatives of employers and employees. It is also available to local, regional and national partner organisations, other Leonardo projects, the National Agencies and the European Commission.

The findings of the evaluation will hopefully assist not only in shaping policy but also to some degree in influencing the way in which policy is implemented. The areas and aspects evaluated were chosen in line with guidance provided by the National Agency advice, which covered the following topics:

INNOVATION

Were the products and processes genuinely innovative in practice and consistent with those defined in the application for funding?

TRANSNATIONALITY

Has the transnational work been successful? Were the partner contributions effective? What synergies were achieved by the partnership as a whole? How innovative was the transnational work of the project, and how did the transnational work influence what was achieved?

VALIDITY

What was the quality and relevance of the project's outputs? How did the project meet the needs of the target group, and how user-friendly were the services and materials developed? Were the

needs of the beneficiaries met? Did the project meet its published goals, and how were these achieved?

DISSEMINATION

Did the project reach a wider audience, and was this dissemination conducted in an effective and timely way?

VALORISATION

Did the work of the project achieve any multiplier effects by its mainstreaming and capitalising on the programme? Were target audiences aware of the work at an early stage of the process? What is the potential for wider impact of the project's activities, and how could that impact be maximised?

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

What synergy, efficiency and energy did the partnership bring to the project, and how did they develop cultural understanding and models of delivery, training and services that were customised to their local needs?

THE LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROJECT

How was the project led, and how effectively was the mission and overarching strategy maintained? How effective was the management and administration in ensuring that all the key deliverables of the project were met and that the partnership worked effectively and synergistically to ensure the project was a success?

Key issues for evaluation as identified by the partnership

In addition to the above issues, the project leaders requested that the evaluator take note of the following issues, some of which are strongly linked to the above overarching issues and some related specifically to the project.

ACTION RESEARCH

The work being undertaken continues important research work done for the previous Peer Mentor Support programme. It has taken the form of an action research study, which includes data from questionnaires, focus group discussions, feedback from employers, and beneficiaries and case studies. The work is being led by FMH but is actively supported by the whole partnership, who have made significant contributions to the study.

This work, which has been progressing well and is thoroughly researched and documented, is crucial to developing the future validity and integrity of the theory and practice underpinning the work of the partnership.

Employer feedback and research, which is a crucial element of Euromentor, has involved a range of focus group discussions with mentors, mentees, supervisors and employers.

FMH produced comprehensive and detailed interim reports up to the present time and will also produce a summative document at the end of the project.

EFFECTIVE USE OF THE WEBSITE

The website is a crucial element of the partnership and has been established to provide a site for displaying all the deliverables of the project, to be a source of public information, to disseminate the work of the project, and to provide a platform for communication between the partners.

While the website fundamentally provided all the basic needs of the partnership, it has been the subject of extended discussion by all the partners, especially the new partners, who at one time felt that it was insufficiently focused on the needs of the new project. It did not always sufficiently delineate between this project and MMI and was not deemed to be sufficiently user-friendly. (Recommendations regarding the website are made later in this report.)

EUROPEAN TRANSFERABILITY

The project has built on the model of transference developed during the Peer Mentoring Support project and has demonstrated the European transferability of the original model.

The evaluator has visited a number of institutions in different cultural and institutional settings where peer mentoring has been modified to work effectively in all the circumstances piloted. It is remarkable how, with adjustments and modifications to meet local needs, the model has been sustained in every environment in which it has been piloted.

Ultimately it is planned that peer mentoring training will be extended by this project, but more centrally by its sister project Me Myself I, into a full European Credit framework.

The project has assisted with the mainstreaming of the programme within other organisations, e.g., probation, youth offending teams, schools, youth and social leisure services, social services departments, and training organisations who at present are unable to meet the stringent needs of their identified target groups

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

This partnership is effective and high-performing, dedicated and hard-working. All the partners have individual responsibilities and in turn contribute to the whole project, which all partners have had a real commitment to complete.

All partners show trust and respect and have also engaged in a range of bilateral activities.

There is no inappropriate competition. There is no significant problem with partners not achieving what they have committed to achieve. Work packages are equitably distributed.

Countries new to the partnership – the Czech Republic and Bulgaria – have no tradition or history of peer mentoring. The balance of experience and fresh thinking they have brought has offered the partnership a range of new perspectives and opportunities.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

There is strong support for cultural exchange. The benefits of each national approach are thoroughly examined, and a common way forward has been identified whenever this was appropriate.

A glossary of terms was evolved over time to ensure that joint documents used the same expressions and terminology that would be the most progressive available within the European Union.

The project team always found time for cultural activities and opportunities for national groups to meet together outside the work-plan meetings to develop cultural and personal relationships. Partners worked hard to ensure these events provided the maximum opportunity to meet and discuss issues beyond the immediate demands of the conference.

VALORISATION: THE POTENTIAL FOR WIDER IMPACT

The extent of valorisation and dissemination records logged on the website was identified by the ECOTEC report as “impressive”, and indeed the partners have developed a wide range of networks and dissemination activities, which have ensured that the project received the widest possible attention and interest.

The dissemination activities for all partners were logged separately and were recorded on the website. Dissemination has been extensive at every level: local, regional, national and European.

Examples include links made in the UK with the National Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. Trinity Fields and Gorseinon College are key players in the development of an All Wales Mentoring and Befriending Forum.

In the Czech Republic seminars have been held for local employers. In Bulgaria interviews were organised with the local and regional press, and there is now a fully translated Bulgarian website. In Portugal five conferences have to date been attended to promote the project, with more planned for the future.

The PMS project from which this project derives was selected by EVTA as one of six Leonardo

projects from across Europe to be promoted by them as part of the MOLPEA project.

Both Welsh partners most of all have been extremely active in disseminating the project and have been particularly successful at dissemination with senior staff and policy-makers and other high-profile organisations.

SYNERGY

There has been evidence of synergy right across the partnership. For example, those with expertise in research and experience in training with people with disabilities and behaviour issues have lent their experience to other partners. This has helped everyone to develop coherent strategies for dealing most effectively with all these groups.

Numerous examples exist in the project, such as Trinity Fields in Wales, who are working closely with staff in the 'Promoting Independence' project providing cross-referrals to this project. Joint working has also taken place with the 14–19 Learning Pathways Consortium, Coleg Gwent and Community Education.

INNOVATION

The subject matter is innovative at regional, national and European levels. The training materials, accreditation programmes and breadth of engagement with differing groups using tested and accredited materials and services are all highly innovative. One key activity, and a challenge still remaining for the partnership, is to overcome the barriers to engaging with employers. The specific challenge is to engage fully with them and to train staff to mentor employees. But there is no evidence to suggest that employers would not become involved if they were given adequate support and training.

VALIDITY

All the work packages' outcomes are recorded on the website. All have been completed successfully. In particular the dissemination activity has significantly exceeded the expectations of the promoter and the partnership.

Discussions with the project management have demonstrated that they have been alert to any slippage in deliverables and ensured that the project stayed on track. Regular reviews and summaries of activity have ensured that individual partner contributions have been highly visible.

Examples of significant outcomes included trainer training taking place in Denmark, led by Trinity Fields and Gorseinon College, delivery to teachers and social workers in Almada Portugal, and similarly by Trinity Fields via Community Education to a range of voluntary and statutory agencies in Caerphilly who are members of the Children and Young People's Partnership. All the training provided was received very positively.

As the project promised, an Individual Vocational Mentorship Action Plan has been completed.

Peer mentor support has been extended to the mental health sector and youth at risk by FMH in Lisbon, and there has been widespread recruitment of mentors by all the partners across the partnership.

The project has completed the production of the very comprehensive Employer Resource Pack and the Individual Vocational Action Plan document.

Research has been carried out with employers to assess the extent of barriers to engagement with the project and their experiences in employing the targeted groups. This research has fed back information to the partners, and in turn this has added to the growing understanding of the work being undertaken. These initiatives to engage with employers have been increasingly successful.

The action plan for the comparative study is now complete. It has drawn together all the important findings of the project.

It is notable how comprehensive and wide-ranging these project outcomes have been. Given the limits of the funding, the outputs are very considerable. The project has provided excellent value for money.

QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF TRAINING PRODUCTS

Training materials and products continue to be tested with a growing range of users. The robust nature of the products has been sustained while they have been customised to the needs of the new client groups. Beneficiaries have been polled on the instruments used, and the delivery and feedback to providers has helped inform and modify the delivery mechanisms and the suitability of the approach.

The services and materials are user-friendly, a fact that has been confirmed by the feedback received. The providers continually modify the training to ensure both customisation and usability.

This section of the report concludes with a case study on the following page.

Case study:

Awareness workshop training by Trinity Fields School with education professionals and school teachers

The training was very well received by the participants, who were in agreement regarding both the value of the work and the understanding they came away with. There was also a strong interest in hearing more about the project and possibly piloting the scheme in their own institutions.

Comments included:

“Most useful. This really raised my awareness.”

“ Gained good knowledge of peer mentoring.”

“ I enjoyed the session, as the presenter demonstrated enthusiasm, knowledge, a good approach and a good record of success.”

“ I am excited about the ideas and the scheme. I think it has great potential.”

Scores for the awareness sessions were high:

	Disagree	Agree to some extent	Agree to a great extent	Fully agree
Workshop was well prepared	0	0	8	13
Methods used were appropriate	0	1	8	12
Content was relevant to the work	1	1	8	11
I gained from the experience	0	2	8	11

Beneficiary feedback

Beneficiary feedback is always a crucial measure of the success of any project. The beneficiaries' views provided the most important evidence of the success of Euromentor. Feedback has been very positive and the evaluator did not meet any mentors or mentees who felt that the experience had been anything but beneficial to them.

Nonetheless they provided valuable feedback on their experiences and offered their thoughts about how the service might best develop.

Almada Portugal

A three-day visit was arranged to meet with a variety of young people being supported by the Portuguese partners Faculdade de Motricidade Humana (FMH) at the University of Lisbon and APPACDM, the Portuguese association of parents and friends of persons with 'intellectual disabilities'. This organisation delivers vocational training for young people in this region and provides residential supported employment and job placement for young people aged 16 and over.

The Portuguese partners work with employers and schools to provide effective placements and training for young people. They also work to ensure that proper support is provided so that those young people can stay and prosper on the programmes.

Peer mentors trained in the previous project continue to support mentees in a wide variety of institutions in this socially and economically deprived region, which lies across the river from Lisbon. FMH is the partner with the key task of providing the research for the project.

The issues of disability, learning difficulties and 'looked-after children' are often considered to be sensitive areas in Portugal. This influenced both the environment in which the work was done and the training and experience of peer mentors working in the field. They tended to express a greater sense of surprise than other beneficiaries that the mentees were 'normal' people, as they were often described by mentors.

Workers on the project explained to the evaluator that in Portugal there is not the same 'social services' tradition as in other countries. There is no strong volunteer culture, and the much stronger family traditions often tend to compensate for this. If there is no family to provide support then this in itself can form the basis of some degree of stigma.

As a result the mentoring programme had to make a significant effort to recruit mentors and assist them in overcoming some of their initial prejudices and becoming engaged with the work.

Terms such as 'mental deficiency' sometimes used by providers themselves tended to mirror this attitude and highlighted the need for the partnership to further develop an agreed set of transnational terms for use by partners.

For this part of the project mentors are generally recruited from students at the university studying in fields that will ultimately lead to work with people in deprived and marginal groups. These students often had a professional incentive to become involved.

FMH have used Euromentor to broaden and deepen their engagement with new groups, including youth at risk, a policy linked to the aims of the Local Commission for Child and Youth Protection and those with mental and physical disabilities.

Approximately 40 young people, both mentors and mentees, were interviewed individually and in focus groups and asked about their experiences. They were asked what had been positive and helpful and how the service could have been improved.

Institutions visited included:

1. Escritório Europa Hospital Júlio de Matos – a psychiatric hospital in Lisbon developing vocational training for people with mental health problems
2. Centro Paroquial do Cristo-Rei – providing support for young offenders at risk
3. Santa Casa da Misericórdia – providing support for young offenders in order to provide training certification
4. Aventur.Ar.Te – a centre for people with disabilities who are engaged in vocational training courses and are employed or looking for work

I. ESCRITÓRIO EUROPA HOSPITAL JÚLIO DE MATOS

This is a centre based in the hospital grounds. It is a professional training project involved in preparing young people for work.

Users included those with drug problems and profound mental health problems. Associated difficulties included dealing with work-related disciplines such as punctuality, attendance and appropriate behaviour while at work.

The centre provided three-month pre-vocational training programmes and also offered orientation skills and updating, with an emphasis on general employability. Subjects offered

included computer skills and personal development skills designed to most effectively prepare the young people for full-time employment.

The manager felt that the inclusion of peer mentoring had been very beneficial. She was pleased with the flexibility of the model and the impact it had made on the ten beneficiaries currently being supported. Similarly there had been a strong impact on the mentors who had to deal with young people who often experienced profound social isolation.

For example, Paolo had developed a strong empathy with his mentee and was enjoying the experience of providing peer support. As a result he had brought a friend who also wished to experience the training.

The emphasis was on supporting mentees to develop skills that would lead to employability or would enable them to find employment for the first time. It was hoped that this would be achieved with the support of the mentor and with the extra confidence that such support would bring to the mentee. The training was focused on computer skills, updating general skills and orientation for work.

The programme led to a work placement for six months, which in turn provided an accreditation in basic competence from the workplace. There still remained a problem of gender balance in the recruitment of mentors, with a strong weighting towards young women. The stigma of mental health was raised by mentors who sometimes expressed surprise that mentees, when encountered, were “not dangerous” and invariably functioned very normally.

“We realised we were *not dealing with freaks*,” said one mentor for whom this had clearly been an expectation.

Many of the mentors from the university described their initial motives for engaging with the mentees as a professional interest and one that would provide a helpful part of their university training. Sometimes they were surprised at the extent to which they were enjoying and benefiting from the experience.

The following tables record the overall beneficiary assessment on a scale of one to five:

Mentors	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
12	6	6	0	0	0

Mentees	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
32	17	11	4	0	0

All the beneficiaries scored the experience positively. Those who gave less than excellent marks were asked what had prevented them from scoring the experience as 'excellent'. The overwhelming reason given by mentees for scoring the experience as less than 'excellent' was that they would have liked to have seen more of their mentors. They sometimes felt that they could not progress within the time available as quickly as they would have liked.

2. CENTRO PAROQUIAL DO CRISTO-REI

This was a centre providing support for young people at risk. Overseen by youth workers, it was a drop-in facility situated on a very deprived estate in Almada.

The centre manager was focused on delivering a facility for young people on the estate who had difficult and often chaotic lives. The centre offered structured and semi-structured provision and was very popular in the area.

FMH had introduced the mentoring programme to the centre and it had gone on to underpin much of the work there. According to the manager the programme was:

"Providing another dimension to the work and supporting many 'at risk' young people in a way that they found helpful and positive."

All the mentoring work in all the centres was developed and managed with energy and enthusiasm by FMH and APPACDM, with a key member of staff from the project providing enthusiasm and a contact point. This ensured that the maximum possible number of mentor relationships could be put in place. The FMH project worker was also able to keep in close contact with the organisations and with individual mentors and mentees. Workers in the institutions mentioned this regular contact and support as a key element.

This active liaison role demonstrated a very high level of commitment and impacted strongly on the success of the scheme. The work relied heavily on this unstinting commitment to the project.

A key aim of Euromentor to extend the range of the work by engaging with new target groups in new environments was being very satisfactorily achieved by these partners.

3. SANTA CASA DA MISERICÓRDIA

This centre within a school was focused on providing support to young people at risk. Twelve mentees were interviewed about their experiences and the benefits for them of the mentoring system. They were experiencing significant social and economic deprivation, living on the margins of society in an area that suffered a great deal from unemployment and associated problems.

The partners had trained mentors specially to cope with this challenging environment, which they had achieved by building strong one-to-one relationships from the outset.

The evaluator had visited this centre once before on the previous PMS project. The scope of the work since that time has been broadened and deepened. Mentors were helping to support mentees with personal difficulties and barriers to learning and were making an hour's visit each week to the centre. The young people were enthusiastic about working with their mentors.

"They fit in more easily with us than other people do," said Carla, a mentee. *"They make you think before you do things. What happens if you try to take a chicken, a fox and some corn in a boat across a river? Things like that..."* said another, referring to a thinking exercise used by one of the mentors.

The group listed all the benefits of having their own mentor. Some of the feedback was quite profound in nature. It was clear that the experience was having a real effect on the self-confidence and self-esteem of the young people in the centre, as the following remarks demonstrate:

"We are happier."

"When we are together, we are happy."

"I have more self-respect now."

"I think I am a better person."

"I feel good."

"I feel relaxed."

"I think my mentor is lovely and I feel a lot better about having a mentor."

4. AVENTUR.AR.TE

This is a centre for people with disabilities who are engaged in vocational training courses and who are employed or seeking employment.

The centre provides vocational training for people with learning difficulties. It was being run with real enthusiasm and commitment but lacked extensive resources and could offer only a limited curriculum to the service users.

Mentors – who in Portugal mostly work without any expenses – had developed excellent relationships with mentees who were clearly benefiting from the enhanced opportunities they had to engage with new people.

Again mentors mostly described their motives for being involved as professional and linked to their studies. Subsequently they had very often been won over by the actual experience of mentoring and had grown attached to their respective mentees.

Celia described the experience as profound:

“It’s another way of seeing the world and an awareness of the value of small things. My self-esteem has risen as a result of doing this work, and it has made me rethink a lot of things in my own life.

I have learned to listen more and to see that other people’s problems are much worse than mine, so I can see things in proportion now.”

Marie had a very active relationship with her mentee, who was keen to be involved in lots of activities. *“We do sport and swimming and talk about music and things like that.”*

Mentees too were very positive about the experience. There was good anecdotal evidence of mentors providing an outlet and a unique level of support for mentees, which others would be unable to perform. The comments below typifies these benefits of mentoring:

“Helena is a fine person. She is very sympathetic and understands me. I can tell her my secrets that I write down but don’t tell to other people and she understands better than anybody.”

“I have a boyfriend and I can talk to her about him. Nobody else knows I’ve got one.”

Altogether there is a wide range of anecdotal evidence that the model was being transferred effectively to an even wider range of users than before. It will be interesting to examine, as a follow-up to the project, what impact the scheme has had on achievement and retention in learning. It is clear already that students and teachers hope for significantly improved results.

Promoting mentoring in Caerphilly

The project manager has been highly successful in disseminating and implementing the model in a range of institutions, including volunteers in schools and in youth clubs via the youth service. Mentors have been very active in supporting young people with learning disabilities to achieve the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award through joint work with the Promoting Independence project. A number of these mentors have also taken part in the award.

Seven local schools and three youth projects were actively involved. Over 200 young people have been trained with an introduction to peer mentoring since 2003, nearly half of them during this project.

A collaboration with the Young Persons Partnership through community education has resulted in plans to mainstream peer mentoring methods and training across the whole range of youth provision in Caerphilly.

This project has generated interest from the Welsh Assembly, which has provided funding via the 14–19 Learning Pathways scheme. The outcome has been additional funding from the Welsh Assembly to pilot the peer mentor training course as an option in Caerphilly secondary schools for Key Stage 4 pupils. Funding has now been secured for a further year and includes additional schools. If this scheme is successful, the promoters hope that peer mentoring will in the future become a core subject.

Case study:**Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni School in Caerphilly**

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni school is a comprehensive secondary school teaching pupils in the medium of Welsh. The school was one of a number of schools in the area to which the project had introduced mentor training. The project also supported a mentoring project within the school.

Head teacher Meredydd James said:

“I have been very impressed with the training programme provided by Trinity Fields. It has empowered our Year 10 pupils to think about others in the school and offers an alternative for pupils with problems.”

Only those pupils who had a pastoral history of being responsible and mature young adults were considered. For those selected it was a reflection of the high esteem in which they were held by the school.

Those young people who maintained a log would be able to progress on the Open College Network Peer Mentoring Qualification. They would also be able to go into partner primary schools to speak to Year 6 pupils as they prepared to come to secondary school.

We met as a focus group with mentors and their mentees, together with project leaders and a teacher.

The mentors had been Year 11 pupils mentoring pupils in Year 7. The scheme had been focussed on helping young people with their reading and improving their confidence. While the work only used some of the mentor training and the contact was limited, the feedback was very good.

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The mentors were taken from one group and were exclusively girls, whereas the mentees were of mixed gender.

The school was deliberately piloting the programme with a small group and with a restricted brief for the mentors. The approach taken by the project manager – encouraging some engagement with the work and building confidence in its efficacy – seemed sensible. The teacher in charge was now committed to widening the scope of the school's involvement next year.

Typically the mentors and mentees were very positive about the experience. The mentors had a range of motives for becoming involved. They wanted to help and to enjoy the benefits of describing their work to universities and employers in the future.

They had all enjoyed the training and felt their confidence had grown while gaining the accreditation. They had kept a record of the achievements of the mentees in the file and there was significant progress identified by them and by the teacher in charge.

Typical comments from mentors included:

"This is enjoyable and I feel good if I can help someone out."

"This is very good experience for me and I am learning a lot."

"I can show I have done this work when I apply to university."

"This is helping me for the future. I am gaining confidence and learning about working with young people."

Mentees were also positive:

"It helps me know more."

"I am making a lot of progress with my reading, which is better now."

"It's helping me with the future."

"I am getting confidence from this."

"I am getting more mature" and "I can solve problems better."

"They are like your friends but not like your friends. It's hard to explain."

The mentors and mentees scored the project as follows:

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Mentors and mentees	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
12	0	10	2	0	0

When prompted to say why nobody gave an 'excellent' score, the majority said that the short intervention (half an hour) was insufficient to make a big difference and that they would have preferred longer. This mirrors findings in other partner countries that the main concern of mentees is the shortage of time available rather than the quality of the input or the scheme.

The mentors were nonetheless very positive about the training and the opportunities to take the work forward and engage in mentoring more fully in the future.

Mentees were happy to have the extra help and appreciated the benefits of young people working with them on a more informal basis. All had demonstrated measurable progress in their studies as a result of the intervention. The school could see the benefits for the individuals involved and in the school's results.

Case study:

Performance at the Puppet Theatre Plovdiv for hearing-impaired children

During the transnational meeting the partners were treated to a performance by mentors and mentees of a mime performance at the Puppet Theatre in Plovdiv.

The young people performed an excellent production (they had chosen to wear their Euromentor sweat shirts for the performance...).

Afterwards in the auditorium these hearing-impaired young people talked about their work as mentors and their experience of being mentees.

This opportunity to work with a new group of mentors and mentees and to develop their self-confidence, life skills and self-esteem goes to the heart of what Euromentor hopes to achieve. The partners are very pleased with the progress being made and with the enthusiasm that the young people have brought to their new roles.

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“I feel wonderful,” said one mentor about doing this work. *“I realise I can help and it gives me a very good feeling.”*

Eva, a mentee, said that her confidence had grown a good deal. *“I have learned a lot about myself and I now know that it is not so difficult to become an actor, which is what I want to do.”*

Vera said that she wanted to study pantomime and to teach other children.

Zvlat was very unsure about his abilities but had grown ever more confident. Mentors and mentees were asked what the ‘best parts’ of the experience had been. Mentors were clear that they had developed their own skills and confidence in dealing with others and that this was helping them in other areas of their life.

Mentees were also building confidence and self-esteem, which was allowing them to move forward. One young person said that although he didn’t know what the future held, he was better able to cope with what came along.



Strengths of the project

Many of the strengths and development issues are inevitably common to both this project and the sister project Me Myself I.

Where this is the case, the same comments and recommendations are made for both projects, which share a common management, a core partnership and the same model of reporting and monitoring.

Strong partnership

The Euromentor partnership is an extremely strong, experienced and productive group who have shared values, common goals and a commitment to genuine transnational working. They share a passionate interest in developing a pan-European strategy to develop peer mentoring and in transferring the work to a variety of new situations.

Between them they have carved out a considerable Europe-wide reputation in this field. New partners had been identified for their ability to add to the strength of the work and extend the actions to new countries and new target groups.

There is a good mix of partners from the north and south of the European Union and from accession countries. They have all brought a variety of experiences, which have proved to be highly complementary.

The partnership, whose capacity to deliver has grown significantly over the last year, is now even better placed to make a major impact on mentoring practice over the next few years, both nationally and at the European level.

Transnational meetings and responsibilities are evenly shared and rotated, with cultural visits providing an important dimension to the meetings. The ECOTEC project visit activity report noted that:

“The partnership is very strong. They are all very supportive of each other. The two new partners have brought a ‘new lease of life’ to the partnership. Communication and attendance at meetings is very good.”

Action research

The action research led by FMH in Lisbon is a vital over-arching piece of work, which is tying experience and theory together to inform the education and training regimes in all the partner

countries and across Europe. It bridges the gap between vocational education and higher education.

Case study

Well-prepared and well-supported employers can provide a real boost to the project's aims. The young beneficiary of Euromentor described in this case study was thoroughly prepared through individual planning and with appropriate support was able to complete an Individual Vocational Action Plan developed through the project.

Jason is a 19-year-old student at Trinity Fields School, which caters for children with special needs. He received classroom support to help him with the practical and communication skills necessary to function in the workplace.

A local work experience placement was set up with a local company called Orange Box. A job coach then supported Jason through his placement to ensure he benefited fully.

Orange Box was so pleased with him that they offered him paid work over the summer. He has now been with the company for 18 months and has a permanent part-time job being mentored by another employee.

"It's very fulfilling for me to have this job," said Jason. "I've made friends here and I really enjoy the job. My workplace mentor Sarah is fantastic. She's a really nice lady and I can talk through any difficulties I have with her."

Les Richards, the purchasing manager at Orange Box, explained: *"Jason is a shining example of how someone, when given the opportunity through something like an EU-funded project, can flourish"*.

The study aims to highlight the extension of peer mentoring and identify the impact of individual or group mentoring, reporting the perceptions of mentoring benefits on individuals and the community. It also aspires to "examine how peer mentors influence the mentees' personal development."

One extension of the work being championed by AEFL Bulgaria is a mentoring programme for deaf children. The report identifies one example from a mentoring programme for deaf children (from Michael McDonald) and explains how profound that engagement can be.

“Imagine not meeting another person of your sex until you were 26 years old. Then for the first time in your life you meet someone just like you. Imagine the shock and surprise. That is what happened to me.”

Leadership management and administration

One of the two or three pivotal strengths of this project is its strategic leadership, management and administration, which have proved to be a bedrock for the quality of the work and the performance of the partnership. The project benefits from the leadership of the head of the institution, who is a highly experienced educationalist and participant in transnational European work and has brought into the project over ten years of experience of working in this field.

The lead partner benefited from this active and enthusiastic support from the senior managers in their institution. It was a characteristic of the whole partnership that their respective senior managers and institutional heads in particular were fully supportive and actively engaged in supporting this work. They all viewed the work of the project as a key element of the strategic plans of their respective institutions. They have also demonstrated their support by speaking at launches, providing internal evaluation services and attending project meetings.

Project management and monitoring

The management team is also led by an experienced educationalist with good experience in European transnational project management. There was a robust management style with a focus on delivery, accountability and achievement. This rigorous approach provided comfort to the partnership that the project was in good hands and would not experience drift or lose its focus. Partners who were not always in full compliance, for example with timely returns, were quickly reminded to ensure their targets were met.

This approach encouraged engagement, supported those who were less experienced, and provided an excellent structure and strategic overview to the group effort.

The strong leadership and management have been instrumental in delivering other highly regarded European projects, and the experience gained there has been lent to this work.

The partnership’s efforts were well organised by the project manager, whose highly focused approach ensured that the group worked with optimal efficiency. A series of planning meetings as the work continued developed the various roles and identified best practice, and these provided a good structure for monitoring the progress of the work packages.

There was continuing internal evaluation of each activity. Evaluation sheets completed for every session at transnational meetings ensured that even short activities were quality-controlled.

All the activities of the transnational work groups and the efforts outside those events were examined and assessed to ensure that they met the overall needs of the project and the partnership.

Project administration

The project was supported by dedicated, effective and experienced project administrators. They were confident and assured in managing the administrative aspects of the programme. The financial administration was shared with MMI, providing financial savings and the opportunity to offer the widest possible range of service and support.

The financial support in particular was a significant benefit to the project, for finances in European projects can be complicated because it is necessary to avoid both under- and over-spending. There is a corresponding requirement to provide good financial projections and tracking methodologies.

The lead partners provided these skills as part of a wider service, while the linked administration with MMI allowed for an even stronger connection.

Budgets and spending defined within the application were effectively interpreted and managed by the finance team to ensure that the project was always in full compliance.

Case study

This is one of a number of individual success stories that were posted on the joint Euromentor/MMI web site.

SWANSEA BAY YOUNG ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR – WORLD OF WORK

Andrew Kent, a Modern Apprentice mentor with the Swansea Youth Offending Team, Wales, UK, has been named the Swansea Bay Young Achiever of the Year in the 'World of Work' category.

Andrew joined the peer mentor support project as a trainee and is now working with the Euromentor project as a trained mentor. He is just completing his NVQ in Youth Justice at Gorseinon College, which he attends one day a week.

Project synergy and shared resources

The work of this project complemented that of the MMI Project and allowed for joint expertise to be used on both projects.

The outcomes of the project were enhanced by the joint use of core services and shared transnational meetings costs, as described elsewhere in this report.

Extensive shared dissemination of the work of the partnership took place on an ongoing basis, which evidenced the enthusiasm and energy brought by the partners to the project.

Good balance of partners

The partnership showed balance in a number of ways. It included partners with experience of European transnational project working and those who were new to this way of working. It also included those from the more affluent north of the EU and the less affluent south and those from the new accession countries.

The partnership was carefully constructed to ensure that its members provided all the key requirements of a high-performing transnational team and that the skills offered were complementary in nature.

The partnership was based on a core existing group who are delivering the third continuous project related to peer mentoring development, with more projects in prospect. This continuity will offer much greater understanding and efficacy as the partnership matures and develops.

Such experience was invaluable to the partnership. The continuity it provided has allowed the partners to understand how each needs to work most effectively. As a result they have developed an effective modus operandi for the group, which has encouraged trust and confidence.

The majority of the partners have a strong track record of working in successful European transnational partnerships and have brought different perspectives to the work. New partners chosen because of the specific attributes they bring to the project have brought freshness to the work of the group while blending well into the established partnership. They have brought new contacts, perspectives and dissemination opportunities, which the partnership has benefited from and used effectively.

On some occasions new partners have felt that some assumptions were being made based on older collaborations, for example in the case of website design. Generally these issues, when addressed, were resolved.

The established partnership track record and stability has provided the bedrock of the work and has significantly aided the project in developing a continuity of effort and the opportunity to 'grow' the work of the new partnership.

The robustness of the partnership and its ability to be mutually supporting is a clear sign of its maturity. Also commendable is the wide range of bilateral activities initiated as a result of the joint work, which have added to the quality of the relationships.

Partnership cultural links

Quite rightly, an important factor in the maturing of the partnership has been the amount of time for personal and group interaction set aside from the crucial transnational meetings. This has provided appropriate opportunities to mix informally, visit examples of local best practice, and experience the culture and environment that gave rise to locally delivered work.

One of the strengths of peer mentoring is the way it can readily be adapted to local conditions and needs. This was why it was so important that these informal opportunities were found.

Despite their ethic of hard-work and commitment, the partners have understood the value of enhancing personal relationships and developing understanding across the whole group. This has been a key element in building up the capacity of the partnership.

Substantive, clear and precise roles for each partner, and working practices that support delivery

As in previous projects, the clearest possible delineation of roles has been identified for all the partners. Some specialise in delivery, others in research and the development of content. Yet others have responsibility for evaluation, dissemination and project management.

While all the partners engaged with all the elements of the project, there was clearly delineated responsibility for different work packages in the project. This approach had the effect of clarifying responsibilities and delivery, for the benefit of the whole partnership. It also ensured that all the work was completed.

The leaders for each of the work packages provided reports not only on progress to date but on the efforts of the workshop at the transnational meetings. Clear agreements about the work needing to be done and the deadlines needing to be met clarified partner expectations of each other and allowed trust to build within the partnership.

Perhaps most importantly this system of rotating leadership, which was apparent as each country

reported on their work, ensured that there was full ownership of the project by all of the partners.

The ensuing level of trust encouraged all the partners to offer more to the partnership than had been contracted and enhanced the overall performance of the entire project.

Aspirational approach

The project team is ambitious. Each of the partners has high expectations of the other partners. The aims of the project include developing products and services that will prove pre-eminent in their field and enjoy a leading position within the European Union.

This ambition drives the project on and provides the belief and clarity of vision that continues to lead the work on to greater success.

Emphasis on the beneficiary

The project has maintained a strong emphasis on the needs of the beneficiary and has asked for the external evaluation to focus on their responses. Mentors and mentees from all the partner countries have scored the experience as 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good', with over 80% scoring the experience as 'excellent'. Comments from beneficiaries have been fed back to partners, who have responded effectively.

The positive strategy of focusing on the end users has ensured that the project continues to meet actual needs. Partners continually listened to the 'customers' who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the work.

E-resource pack for trainers and awareness pack for employers

The Employer Resource Pack is now complete, translated into partner languages and is in use by employers, providing advice and raising awareness. As the guide explains in its introduction: "*If there's a problem with job performance, we'll approach our workers with disabilities the way we would approach any other employee, except maybe we'll be a little clearer, a little gentler explaining....*"

The project has achieved some good links with employers to train and support them in working with marginalised groups.

The study aims to "*highlight the extension of peer mentoring and identify the impact of individual and group mentoring and reporting on the perceptions of mentoring benefits on the individual and the community.*"

The pack, which was written with support and contributions from all the partners, is a comprehensive, well-researched, authoritative document. It draws together best practice in working with employers and develops that approach, with a focus on working with mentors in the workplace. As in the case of the action research, this report has created a strong academic and practical contribution to this area of work, which provides the project with an effective guide as well as legitimacy.

Dissemination

Dissemination activities have been numerous and extremely varied. Traditional methods of dissemination at conferences and through papers and talks to key linked organisations have been matched by less traditional approaches via television, press releases, targeted sponsorship and political lobbying.

The dissemination strategy has followed the pattern of previous projects in ensuring that dissemination has been constant throughout the period of time that the project has been in progress.

Each partner was invited to review their dissemination activity at each transnational meeting and ensure that activity was logged on the website. Activities to date have included radio interviews, publication of guides and academic papers, and links with regional government and other universities.

In Wales, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and the local Welsh Assembly Member continue to be kept abreast of developments.

The Alliance for Ecology and Foreign Languages in Bulgaria (AEFL) carry the logo of the project on a racing car as part of their dissemination strategy!

Strong links have been established with local schools to develop mentor training and ensure that there was provision for developing mentoring throughout the region.

This proliferation of the project's activities via training and deployment has proved an excellent mechanism for disseminating the project as widely as possible. Mostly this has been achieved in a practical, informal way that allowed for the take-up and development of the model by other institutions.

Euromentor has tried to encourage organisations to adopt the model and consequently benefit from greater impact. As the project reaches its conclusion, it is noticeable that the rising level of interest is coming from ever more senior people.

Attendees at an employers' forum at Trinity Fields, Caerphilly, in February 2007 included the Human Resources Manager for Parliamentary Services at the Welsh Assembly Government, the Chair of the Local Health Board and its Personnel Manager.

Evaluation

The partnership has been very aware of the benefits of rigorous evaluation and monitoring of the project's activities and outputs. It has introduced and refined a number of practices to ensure that this evaluation is genuine and thorough and that the partnership effectively responds to all issues raised.

An appointed internal evaluator monitors the work of the project and liaises effectively with the external evaluation process.

The internal evaluator is also responsible, with the support of the external evaluator, for the evaluation workshops that are held at every transnational event. Each workshop and working group rigorously evaluates the work and benefits of each session, and the results have been fed back to the evaluation and management groups.

The external evaluator attends every meeting, has been encouraged to participate where appropriate, and has provided ongoing feedback to the project management and the partnership as a whole.

This comprehensive, rigorous approach to the work has impacted strongly on both the quality and the performance of everyone involved in the project. It also reflects the confidence and assurance within the group.

Valorisation and external recognition

The project partnership group who co-wrote and developed the initial project strategy were determined to ensure that valorisation would feature strongly in its final outcomes.

As a result of the success of the earlier projects, the group had already developed a Europe-wide reputation as leaders in the field of peer mentor training in a range of settings.

This level of awareness by partners, policy-makers and providers has led to a range of invitations to attend and speak to national and Europe-wide conferences about the work of the project.

This project was launched at an international conference in Swansea in October 2005, which was attended by all the partners.

The project manager from Euromentor and the MMI project, led by Gorseinon College in Swansea, were invited to the EVTA conference in Bucharest to discuss the previous PMS project and the present linked Euromentor and MMI projects. As a result of this presentation the partnership was able to share the work of the PMS project as well as Euromentor and MMI with a very wide audience.

The Valorisation Conference held in Mallorca in April 2006 was awarded to the PMS project, and the extensive contacts that had been made earlier in Bucharest were in part responsible for the strong interest shown in the Mallorca conference.

This high level of awareness has been sustained by enabling organisations to track the work of the project via the evolving website and other dissemination-focused publications.

In turn the Valorisation Conference became a powerful vehicle for promoting and broadening the impact of both Euromentor and MMI to a wider European audience.

An apprentice mentor was selected as a Leonardo Ambassador for the launch of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the UK by Mr Bill Rammell, Minister for Lifelong Learning.

As a result, the project has been strongly promoted by a wide range of institutions, including the British Mentoring Association. It has also been promoted in policy papers being presented to the Commission who are presently examining European Union policies in this field of education and training.

Innovation

There are a number of areas in which the project is innovative. Some examples include:

Its selection by EVTA as one of only six Leonardo projects from across Europe to be promoted by them as part of the MOLPEA project. The project has engaged with new countries where peer mentoring is a new concept.

The highly innovative support system it provides between vocational and higher education and between training and employment, transferable across all systems.

Innovative approaches to vocational training using peer mentors as a vehicle by which to promote individual programmes.

Peer mentor training started for parent mentors (in partnership with the Swansea Youth Offending Team) in January 2007, which is proving to be a great success.

The national agency, impressed with the accreditation work being taken forward by the project, described it as *“proving hugely important as a confidence booster to those undertaking the programme.”*

Use of case studies

The project leaders have encouraged the partners to seek out case studies to illustrate the work of the project and to bring more vividly to the attention of those involved with the partners the impact of what is being achieved.

The format for case studies includes an introduction, general information, personal programme objectives, sessional activities, outcomes and a case study, actions taken, and arrangements to facilitate transfer and ensure sustainability.

This model has served to clarify and provide helpful exemplars of the work the project is promoting and demonstrate the impact of the activities to those organisations considering their possible involvement. The case studies serve to bring the project to life and provide a sense of how as a result people's lives are changed.

Equal opportunities

The precursor to this bid, the Peer Mentor Support project, was identified in the ECOTEC transnational partnership guidance notes as demonstrating best practice in finding innovative strategies for equal-opportunity employment.

The focus of Euromentor was to engage with those denied equal opportunities from the widest possible range of disadvantaged and disaffected groups. It has provided them with individual support by way of peer mentoring and has been customised to their particular needs. The project has offered social, emotional and cultural support, as well as practical help with study and finding and maintaining employment. Ensuring equal opportunities is the main objective of the project.

Employer forums

This has been a key development in engaging with the employer group, which is so critical to the outcome of the project. In all the partner countries there has been a need to persuade this group about the real personal and business benefits of the scheme. This has never been an easy task and in certain cases has proved problematic. There is evidence that while employers have been keen to be involved, for the scheme to achieve success in the workplace they will require induction training and support.

In Wales the employer forum has already led to growth in the employment prospects for

mentees. The Welsh partners have engaged with some key local employers to further develop the work of the project. In contrast to this, partners in the Czech Republic have tended to struggle with a reluctance shown by employers to engage with marginalised groups, especially young offenders.

Transnational adaption

The project is well positioned to translate the work of the various countries to wider groups. This has been achieved by using the experience of adaptation to different cultural, social and educational settings.

The new Bulgarian and Czech partners have provided a fresh perspective to the work of the partnership. The Bulgarian partner in particular has been instrumental in pursuing the 'transfer of innovation', which is a key mission of the project, to new audiences.

The content of the project is highly congruent with emerging policy in the European Union and is increasingly congruent with broader national policies across the whole EU.

The project's activities support young marginalised groups who are unable to effectively access the support of the various national institutions and who encounter obstacles to physical access to those institutions. They have socio-economic difficulties and often have poor self-esteem and feelings of low self-worth.

The project is delivering a genuinely flexible, robust model of peer mentor training, which has been widely and successfully trialled across a wide range of European countries.

This partnership 'thinks' in a European and transnational context and made no attempt to use a European project to meet national needs or export one national model directly into a foreign environment.

The partnership 'understands' cultural and educational policy differences across the partnership and has an interest in and indeed a passion for diversity.

Although the early development work was done in Wales in the UK, there has been no attempt to 'export' the work wholesale and no attempt to require partner countries to comply with one model.

The strong emphasis on finding local solutions and customising the work to fit local social and economic circumstances has allowed the work to proliferate. It has also ensured that the robustness of the model has been effectively tested in diverse environments.

Transnational meetings were rotated. Study visits and cultural experiences figured extensively on the agenda. Partners were encouraged to share their national activity on a transnational basis via the website and at conferences and valorisation events. The partnership has established a forum for social dialogue and a strong cultural partnership.

Communication and language

Communication within the partnership is generally very good. The main vehicle for this has been the website, which has been gradually developed by BDF over the last four years. Relationships are strong, and a high degree of trust exists within the partnership, which has encouraged group and bilateral exchanges to take place.

The agreed working language of the partnership is English. Meetings have been conducted in English without the need for translators, which has very significantly helped the progress and fluency of the communication.

Nevertheless partners were reminded by non-native speakers that there was a fatigue and concentration factor, which needed to be taken into consideration. This was meant to ensure that all partners could share equally in discussions. Everyone was asked to be alert to any slippage from this understanding.

It also became apparent in early meetings that while discussions ranged around the same key issues, there were variations in the terms used to describe different beneficiaries, medical conditions, etc.

The partnership acknowledged the need to ensure that there was an agreed set of terms that would be used. The need for a glossary of terms and definitions was agreed, and these were refined during the course of the project.

Strong academic and refereed credentials for training materials

The project has developed well-regarded training materials, which have been properly refereed and accredited. These materials are in regular use within the project and form the basis of a unique service for future trainees and educators.

The project has been cited in a number of articles and publications as having strong credentials and a service that has been creatively and effectively developed.

The project was identified and singled out by ECOTEC in their transnational partnership guidance notes as demonstrating best practice in finding strategies for developing equal opportunities.

Potential for commercialisation and further development

There is significant potential for further exploitation of the model via commercial activities. These opportunities are explored in 'Areas for future development' (see page 43). The partnership has a highly regarded and well-tested model with a large and growing demand and has a development lead on its competitors. Commercialisation and intellectual property rights (IPR) etc. have been discussed, but much more would need to be done when and if the partnership decides to broaden the model on a commercial basis.

A range of issues still need to be resolved, including business planning, detailed IPR arrangements, commercial partners and other considerations as this planning process goes forward.

Long-term view: the fit with European and national policy and other organisations' strategic priorities

The project has a long-term strategy to develop a Europe-wide accredited service with supporting research work and penetration into a wide range of new markets. In this regard the project has demonstrated ambition and a strategic focus, which in turn has provided the partnership with a strong context in which to develop and progress.

Strong support from partners' senior managers and policy-makers

A key aspect of the project has been the support and encouragement supplied by all the senior managers within the partner institutions and their active engagement in the project. It is an important but often underestimated strength of any partnership that it is supported effectively from beyond the immediate partnership group and by institutional heads in particular.

Issues arising from the project

The website

There were real concerns about the website development at the start of the project. Some partners, especially new partners, felt that the site was not meeting their needs.

Many felt that it was not sufficiently user-friendly or properly customised to the needs of new members. New members also felt strongly that it often felt like a site designed for the continuation of work from a previous project in which they had not participated.

The site was not perceived to be user-friendly to visitors from outside the partnership. They believed that the project was not sufficiently delineated from MMI at the front end of the site. It was also felt that technical issues were not being resolved effectively and in a timely way. While the continuity of the development of the site had some benefits, partners in general were still unhappy with the service.

A number also voiced an interest in a chat room facility, which would further aid communication and enable information to be provided in different languages when they logged in.

Hits on the site have been decreasing over recent months. This development causes concern, as the hope had been that its use would progressively grow – for websites are no longer just a useful feature of transnational projects but a necessity and a focus for all communication.

At the last transnational meeting in Lisbon the issues were raised again and new staff from the partner responsible were making an effort to ensure that these concerns were being met.

Working with new target groups

This proved very to be very successful across the partnership as the project moved to work with new countries and new groups. There were, however, some barriers to inclusion.

For example, the Czech partners Tempo had identified a key target group of young offenders leaving institutions or at risk. They had found it almost impossible to persuade Czech employers to engage with this group. Consequently progress was slow.

In a case like this, where major barriers to inclusion or progress have been noted, it would be useful to reflect further on the nature and extent of those barriers and learn any lessons for future initiatives with employers.

This, however, was not the experience of other partners, who frequently experienced significant success in engaging with employers.

Gender balance

The gender balance for peer mentors and peer educators continued to be weighted strongly towards girls and young women, who appear to gravitate to the work more readily than boys or young men.

This is a perennial problem in this area of work. There is a need for a broader mix, as the needs of mentees are often gender-specific, and it is often appropriate for mentors and mentees to be of the same gender. The project team are aware of these discrepancies and are continually looking at more effective ways to target young men to train as mentors.

Assimilation of new partnerships

Issues were raised early in the project that the established partners might not be taking sufficient account of the needs of new partners and that there might be insufficient awareness that this was a new partnership and not just an extension of an older one.

As none of the new partners were native English-speakers, the sense of not being fully included was somewhat compounded.

However, the group proved able to work through assumptions that were being made. This process ensured that the emphasis returned to one in which the whole group felt engaged. Project managers in particular needed to ensure that this sensitivity to non-native speakers was maintained consistently. The project manager and the internal evaluator regularly reminded the group to communicate clearly, speak with slow clear diction, and take regular work breaks.

New protocols

One issue that may have warranted greater attention by the partnership at an early stage was the identification of a clear protocol of behaviours.

This protocol would have highlighted expectations of the group as a whole and ensured that misunderstandings were less likely to arise during the course of the two-year project.

Protocols could take the form of expectations with regard to practical matters such as behaviour in meetings; use of language; terms used; punctuality; timeliness of reports; and other basic issues that the partners might identify.

The existence of such a protocol and set of agreements and understandings assists all partners in developing a shared culture. It would also have provided a reference point should any misunderstandings or disputes have arisen during the course of the project.

Developing joint documents and training materials

Partners identified an urgent need for a clear discussion concerning terminology, leading to a subsequent definition of terms and the creation of a bibliography, which in this field differed widely across the European Union. This proved essential for writing authoritative Europe-wide documents and training manuals.

The importance of a native-speaker editorial was also acknowledged as an important issue for the future. This would ensure that project documents and papers could be prepared most effectively for European audiences and journals. It would also ensure that key terms were standardised.



Areas for further development

Commercialisation and exploitation

The partnership's work has reached an advanced stage. The project partners have developed sophisticated learning materials, training manuals and accredited courses, broadened the beneficiary base, and developed a strong European network. It has an excellent reputation throughout Europe for high-quality research and innovative models that have been effectively trialled.

The period of awareness-raising can now make way for even more dissemination and exploitation of the results, including their commercialisation. An important step for the partnership will then be to consider how to exploit and commercialise the products of the work. A start has already been made on this: the lead partners have identified a package of services and products to be provided for other institutions on a consultancy basis. They have also made progress in developing an outline intellectual property rights (IPR) agreement.

Training materials are being sold and partners are providing fee-based training in work developed within the project. To fully commercialise the work, however, there would be a great deal more to do.

This activity is perhaps the most challenging of all for the partnership and carries the work onto completely new ground. The partnership would have to address a wide range of issues before they could move confidently down this route. Work to be progressed as the project reaches its conclusion and for the partners beyond the end of this project includes:

- The development of a thorough business plan for the whole venture
- Further research and development funding
- Market research and market testing
- Resolving intellectual property rights
- Identifying which commercial partners would be appropriate or interested
- Establishing the attitude of the participant institutions to the business risk
- Full risk assessment
- Clear financial planning and projections etc.

Training and academic organisations are often neither inclined nor geared towards developing commercial enterprises on any scale. Much would depend on strategic and senior management support from the participant organisations. It should be acknowledged that not all partner institutions would wish to take this much further.

Continued valorisation

The project team will need to continue to valorise and disseminate the work of the project. This is now the most effective strategy for gaining national and international acknowledgment and recognition.

The project has performed extremely well in this area, but partners are reminded that the work must be ongoing even after the project ends if full exploitation of results is to be achieved and partner reputations are to be maintained.

Clarity with activities and deliverables for both projects

There is no evidence that the project leaders of Euromentor and the closely linked MMI project have blurred their various activities.

On the contrary, the respective project leaders described in both project applications offered to deliver considerable synergy, and this has been achieved. This joint working has allowed both projects to deliver far more outputs than would otherwise have been possible.

Nonetheless it would be helpful if the managers of both projects reviewed documentation surrounding both of them and any related future projects to see whether complete transparency in the work of the two projects could be easily demonstrated.

It was made clear in the project application that there would be shared resources including meetings, websites etc., but that the costs saved would translate into a greater level of deliverables and outcomes.

Nevertheless the UK National Agency ECOTEC report highlighted the need to clearly differentiate between Euromentor and its partner project MMI and ensure that the roles of all partners on both projects were clearly defined and not “blurred”.

Development of connections with employers

In Work Package 5, ‘Integration into employment’, work with employers has developed extremely well. The partners have established important networks and made excellent progress.

Nevertheless success in establishing strong pathways into local workplaces is of the greatest importance in achieving a strong base for the future. As previously described, the Czech partners encountered serious difficulties in engaging with employers. Their coordinator wrote: *“Offering our mentees to small companies is a ‘superhuman task’, because the moment they hear about young delinquents, they finish our conversation.”*

The project might benefit from reviewing the achievements and barriers to achievement with employer engagement.

The Employer Resource Pack is an excellent document for familiarising employers with the challenges of employing people with disability, young delinquents and other marginalised groups in particular.

To cite one example – the case of Jason, who is the exemplar used in the employer’s pack – progression can be seen in the workplace from job-coaching to mentoring. Jason has been assisted in gradually assimilating himself into the work environment.

Impact assessment

It would also be timely to review the impact of the project to date, using this report as a starting point, and assess whether expectations have been met and how much impact can be identified at this time.

A post-project review with beneficiaries would provide an accurate assessment of the perceived benefits of the project.

Promoting the business case for working with people with disability and people from marginalised groups

Engaging with employers and motivating them to employ young people within these target groups is one of the greatest challenges of the project. For example, both FMH in the action research and Trinity Fields have done some excellent work in establishing a business case, which has encouraged employers to become involved.

In terms of disability these benefits include: greater reliability; improved punctuality; better staff morale; and staff, customers and the community perceiving the organisation to be more caring. There is scope in the future for actively marketing these benefits to organisations who are perhaps pondering whether or not to provide placements or employment opportunities.



Conclusions

The project has built very successfully on the last Peer Mentor Support (PMS) project in which the core of this partnership was involved. It has taken the work further by tackling an even wider range of disadvantaged and marginalised groups of young people than before.

There is both continuity and innovation in this work. The experience of the PMS project is proving beneficial to the development of the new work, and especially the development of supporting instruments such as the Employer Resource Pack.

This has been a highly effective partnership with a Europe-wide reputation for developing materials and delivering training in this field of study, which is increasingly enjoying positive support from educational organisations, youth workers, employers and politicians.

The new Czech and Bulgarian partners have provided fresh energy for the project and brought new perspectives, which have enhanced the work of the experienced core team.

All the work packages have progressed to a satisfactory conclusion.

There has been a very significant level of dissemination and valorisation activity across the whole partnership. The recorded dissemination activity delivered far exceeds any reasonable expectation of a project with this level of funding.

Mentors and mentees interviewed for this final evaluation have been near-unanimous in their enthusiastic response to the training and experience of being a mentor or mentee.

The work has continued to demonstrate high levels of flexibility, adaptability and significance for a very wide range of social, age and transnational groups.

The employer forum and the support from local employers has proved to be a success, as has the Employer Resource Pack, which has now been developed and translated. This engagement with employers will allow the development of a key strand of new activity in the workplace, which in turn should form a strong heritage for the project.

The project partnership's determination has been matched by the value and importance of the work being done. Working together as a team, their determination and commitment has led to a very positive and successful outcome, with an exciting future ahead for the partners, and transnational prospects for this whole endeavour.



Sources of information

Minutes of steering group meetings
Project budgets
Website assessment
Employer Resource Pack (Work Package 5)
Training manuals
Management group plus sub-groups
Transnational minutes and progress reports
Attendance at all transnational meetings and all the management and work-package meetings possible during that time
Assessment of transnational workshop scores, records and evaluations
Beneficiary meetings in focus groups, informal gatherings and one-to-one interviews, feedback from beneficiary evaluation forms, and meetings in a range of other settings
Beneficiary three-day extended visit to Lisbon to interview and meet mentors and mentees in those institutions who are working with the university to support the activities of mentors
Beneficiary-focused two-day visit to Swansea and Caerphilly to meet mentors and mentees and interview key project staff
Beneficiary interviews in Plovdiv, Bulgaria
Beneficiary focus groups in Caerphilly
Beneficiary self-administered questionnaires
Beneficiary one-to-one interviews
Analysis of record-keeping
Briefing from the leader of the Euromentor project group
Meetings and telephone discussions with the project leader
Minutes of the Evaluation and Valorisation Group
Participant observation
Interviews and one-to-one meetings and interviews with project national leaders
Interview with Council officer and member of project steering group
Interviews with tutors and training managers
Interview with lead lecturer for developing peer mentor training materials and course development
Interview with the Senior Manager, Youth Offending Team, Swansea
Mentoring training pack
All external evaluation workshops at transnational events
All project management workshops and meetings
Individual case studies
Centre training visits
Discussion with the partners and progress reports from the lead partners

Observation of partner interaction
Attendance and speaker at the final event for the Peer Mentor Support event and the project launch event for Me Myself I in Swansea during July 2005
Attendance at local steering groups
Attendance at selected other workshops at transnational events
Review of internal evaluations
All data from the project website, including reports, marketing, information and the dissemination by partners of local activities and information
Discussions with the internal evaluator and joint preparation of evaluation workshops at transnational meetings
Full Leonardo grant application
ECOTEC feedback
ECOTEC Leonardo visit on 9th August 2006
UK National Agency Leonardo Dissemination Notes
UK National Agency Leonardo Transnational Partnership Guidance Notes
UK National Agency Leonardo Evaluation Guidance Notes
Minutes of steering group meetings
Workshop leader reports
Beneficiary personal development logs
Project budgets and financial data and reports
European coaching and mentoring council reports
Project output reports
Internal evaluations and workshop transnational evaluation reports
Trinity Fields Euromentor presentation
Participant observation in peer mentor sessions
Review of products
Mentoring training pack and sample mentor files
Project research documents
Partner marketing and promotional information
Samples of lesson plans
Training manuals
Progress reviews
Transnational minutes and progress reports
Records of all the transnational meetings of the partnership to date in Swansea, Prague and Lisbon
European Mentoring and Coaching Council Reports

Paul Garvey and Associates Ltd, July 2007



